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Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 July 2018, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Ms. Chatardova (Czechia)
President: Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary President** declared open the 2019 session of the Economic and Social Council. Reflecting on the work accomplished during her tenure as President, she said that the 2018 session had coincided with several new and emerging challenges for the global community, and that progress had been made towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. In line with the Council's theme "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities", the key emphasis of her presidency had been to develop initiatives towards fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through the participation of all. Participation had been an inherent tool in contributing to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 16. The Council had endeavoured to demonstrate the equal importance of all Sustainable Development Goals and had showcased the success stories and good practices of diverse countries. Her presidency had emphasized that, in addition to leaving no one behind, no Goal should be left behind.

3. The 2030 Agenda had recognized that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions was an indispensable and cross-cutting requirement for sustainable development. To explore further collective action on that issue, a special meeting of the Council had been held, together with complementary meetings convening stakeholders and high-level representatives of the Government of the Czech Republic, Member States and the United Nations system, to share ideas on their understanding of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation. Thus, pathways had been identified to strengthen institutional frameworks for increased participation.

4. In moving forward, it was essential for Council members to bear in mind the integrated character of the 2030 Agenda. While breaking down entrenched siloes was a daunting task and shifting long-established behaviours was challenging, continuing down the same road was not an option.

5. The integration segment, under the theme of "Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies", had analysed pathways for building resilience through integrated policies. While technology alone was unable to resolve global challenges, it offered an increased number of options and could simplify the deployment of effective solutions. Young people, as agents of change

who could quickly adopt new technologies, must be empowered.

6. During its 2018 session the Council had held a joint meeting with the Second Committee, entitled "The future of everything — sustainable development in the age of rapid technological change", providing a platform to analyse key trends in technology and innovation in recent years, and their effects. The meeting had also involved the participation of the first robot as a panellist at the United Nations. The discussion had reaffirmed the need to take immediate action to harness technology in order to resolve development problems, while putting people and the planet first, and recognizing both the power and dangers of technology.

7. The Council had continued to emphasize the importance of engaging stakeholders from the business community in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The 2018 Partnership Forum had demonstrated how Sustainable Development Goal targets for inclusion could be translated into business goals to benefit the lives of women, young people and vulnerable persons. Long-term engagement and dialogue among all partners and effective regulatory frameworks were key to aligning private sector operations with the Goals. The Partnership Forum had highlighted the potential of big data for the common good, and the need for consistent and sustainable data over time to effectively measure progress.

8. The Council recognized the valuable contribution of young people to development. Several of its meetings had demonstrated that introducing young people to participation at an early age taught the next generation the importance of involvement and empowered them to change their environment. Indeed, the Council's annual Youth Forum had become a platform for young people to contribute to policy discussions and had attracted a record number of participants in 2018.

9. A special meeting of the Council had been convened in 2017 on the "Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda", which had demonstrated the disproportionate impact of climate change on countries with high levels of vulnerability, many of which were small island developing States. The meeting had also underscored the need to increase access to concessional finance for such countries and to take concerted action to ensure that no one was left behind.

10. The Council's operational activities for development segment had provided a key platform to respond to the common call to make the United Nations development system demand-driven, accountable and responsive, based on the framework of the quadrennial

comprehensive policy review. The resident coordinator system needed to be empowered and to receive sufficient funding, and United Nations country teams should provide tailored responses according to country contexts. The discussions held had been essential in laying the groundwork for successful negotiations on General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

11. The Council's forum on financing for development follow-up in 2018 had convened a record number of participants, who had worked to make progress on the seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The 2018 report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development had provided an analytical foundation for the discussions and the outcome document. In addition, the inaugural Sustainable Development Goal Investment Fair had convened key actors from the public and private sectors, responding to growing interest in investment opportunities in sustainable development and highlighting the benefits of cooperation with all stakeholders.

12. The 2018 high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum had concluded that radical change at a significantly accelerated pace was necessary in order to fulfil the expectations of the 2030 Agenda. Development cooperation must become more risk- and conflict-sensitive and more resilient, with stronger links to climate action. Strengthening the Forum as a platform for interregional and multi-stakeholder knowledge-sharing on the monitoring and assessment of development cooperation was fundamental to achieving and enhancing sustainable development results.

13. The analytical inputs, recommendations and outcomes of the forum on financing for development follow-up and the Development Cooperation Forum were key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and they must be better linked to the Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

14. The humanitarian affairs segment had facilitated the sharing of experience, innovations and best practices from across regions and sectors. It had focused not only on problems, including the protection of civilians in conflict situations and the provision of aid in cases of natural disasters, but also on solutions. The Council's event to discuss the transition from relief to development had reflected the call to overcome silos and had highlighted the importance of effective links between humanitarian and development systems.

Stronger cooperation and long-term solutions were necessary in addressing the current crises.

15. In line with its mandate, the 2018 multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals had promoted networking and had discussed the challenges and technological solutions with a transformative impact for the Goals. Global trends and cross-cutting issues had also been addressed, including the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Goals; national science, technology and innovation road maps and capacity-building for the Goals; local and indigenous knowledge and innovations; and the next steps for the Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

16. The reports of the Council's subsidiary bodies had been reviewed at the coordination and management meetings, during which special country situations and regional issues had been considered, and system-wide coordination and review of development issues such as gender mainstreaming and non-communicable diseases had been carried out. The Council's Bureau had also convened a meeting with the Chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies to make progress towards harmonizing and coordinating the work of the Council and the Council's system as a whole.

17. The 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development had demonstrated strong momentum for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While further progress must be made in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, several examples of the ways in which the Agenda was being translated into concrete policies and measures had been presented. A record number of countries had submitted voluntary national reviews, reporting significant progress, including the incorporation of the Goals and targets into national development plans and strategies. The forum was becoming a meaningful space for peer learning, and the level of engagement from major groups and stakeholders had been unprecedented.

18. Lastly, the Council's high-level segment had explored ideas on the future of the Sustainable Development Goals and the role of new and emerging technologies for their achievement. Discussions had highlighted the importance of an integrated, coherent approach among all actors, within and outside the United Nations, in accordance with the theme: "Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all".

Agenda item 1: Election of the Bureau

19. **The Temporary President** said that, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical

rotation among the regional groups, it was the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate a candidate for President. She therefore took it that the Council wished to elect Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), who had been nominated by those States, to the post of President of the Council.

20. *It was so decided.*

21. *Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) was elected President by acclamation.*

22. *Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) took the Chair.*

23. **The President**, noting that the election of the Vice-President of the Council from Eastern European States would be held at a later date, said that three candidates had been nominated to fill the vacancies for the posts of Vice-Presidents of the Council from African States, Asia-Pacific States, and Western European and other States. She took it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by those regional groups.

24. *It was so decided.*

25. *Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Mr. Locsin, Jr. (Philippines) and Mr. Hattrem (Norway) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council by acclamation.*

26. **Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) said that the outgoing President had ensured that the priorities of developing countries were always considered in the Council's work, allowing them to become strategic partners with a view to achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda. She hoped that the election of the new President, the fourth woman to ever preside over the Council, would help to break the glass ceiling regarding women's participation.

27. **Mr. Regis** (Observer for Haiti) said that the outgoing President had led the Council's work with dignity and honour. As a Caribbean country affected by the dire human consequences of climate change, Haiti welcomed the election of the new President, Ms. King, a talented and effective ambassador from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines who was guided by her faith in multilateralism. As a representative from the Latin American and Caribbean region, Ms. King had worked tirelessly to ensure regional security as well as regional cohesion on issues ranging from poverty eradication to climate change and terrorism.

28. **The President** said that her main priorities would be to ensure a successful high-level political forum on sustainable development and to revive the Economic and Social Council, using the hard-won innovations introduced by General Assembly resolution 72/305. In

2019, Council members must work together to restore the Council's deliberative function, as well as its policy guidance and coordination role. States members of the Council had noted that they wished to see a revitalized high-level segment that was forward-looking and could stimulate reflections on how long-term and future trends, including new technologies, could impact the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Council should proactively look for ways to harness opportunities and become more resilient to potential risks. Dialogues with thought leaders would be convened periodically to catalyse thinking in preparation for the high-level segment.

29. The integration segment should leverage the functional and regional commissions of the Council, as well as other expert bodies, to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including by providing specific guidance. Such bodies should be more solutions-orientated in order to strengthen the work of the Council itself. She was committed to engaging with the bureaux of subsidiary bodies to plan their contributions to the Council's work and to spearhead the review of their working methods as mandated by the General Assembly.

30. The theme of the 2019 high-level political forum would be "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" and would focus on reviewing progress regarding Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. Thematic and voluntary national reviews could be further improved by adopting a more integrated approach and building on the enthusiasm and successes of the first three years.

31. 2019 would present a unique situation, as the high-level political forum would not only meet under the auspices of the Council, but also under the auspices of the General Assembly when Heads of State and Government would review the entire 2030 Agenda. Solutions must be found to strengthen the following cycle of reviews while looking forward towards the 23 targets that were set for 2020. As the work of the various subsidiary bodies, forums and segments was extremely valuable for the 2030 Agenda, ways must be found to bring their analysis and policy proposals to the fore to enrich the forum's work. No opportunity should be missed to give voice to young people and their ideas. Civil society must be further mobilized, including non-governmental organizations, academia, scientists and the private sector.

32. Council members should work together to deliver a strengthened operational activities for development segment, as envisioned in General Assembly resolutions 72/305 and 72/279. The Council's guidance and overall

coordination of the United Nations development system would be key to ensuring coherence, coordination and accountability with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which called for an integrated approach to achieve policy coherence across all sectors. Coherence was required not only at the national level, but also at the intergovernmental level. More effective engagement was needed with the Peacebuilding Commission to harness the interlinkages among the peace and security, human rights and development pillars of the United Nations.

33. Climate change was a grave concern for Member States, especially small island developing States: it threatened development gains, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As President, she intended to highlight the transformative actions that could be taken to help countries manage climate change and become more resilient. It was time to increase ambition and galvanize action for climate commitments. The Council must demonstrate the interlinkages between climate change and the other Sustainable Development Goals, thus contributing to the midterm review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and to the review of Goal 13 on climate action. The Council's contribution could help Member States to overcome the silo approach when implementing the commitments made in the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in the lead-up to the 2019 Climate Summit.

34. The Council would harness the energy of the high-level political forum to promote higher standards of living as well as economic and social progress and sustainable development. It would do so strictly within the boundaries of its mandate, but would remain open to convening special meetings as appropriate. The Council must make sure that the forum remained a visionary and action-oriented platform.

35. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist) said that the Council had intensified its efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda during the 2018 session by fostering debate and innovative thinking to address increasingly complex, multifaceted global challenges: the high-level political forum had discussed the gaps, challenges and solutions relative to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation had continued to highlight the importance of science, technology and innovation for the achievement of the Goals; and the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up had focused on securing the necessary financing.

36. The elections of Ms. Chatardova and Ms. King marked the first time that two women had presided over the Council in direct succession, which showed real, albeit slow, progress in the realm of gender parity. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/1, Member States would review the work of the Council with a view to enhancing its working methods to better deliver on its core responsibilities; the resolution also sought to strengthen the high-level forum by providing focused and relevant contributions. The resolution was timely, as many impediments remained and 2019 would likely be a challenging year. It was also important to note that, in 2019, the high-level political forum would be held under the auspices of both the Council and the General Assembly, assessing progress on individual Goals and on the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda in those respective bodies.

37. Both the Council and the forum must focus on the question of inequalities, which remained unacceptably high in all dimensions of human life and posed a challenge to the Goals and the 2030 Agenda, both among and within countries. The international community must come together in support of the Goals if it wished to ensure that no one was left behind.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2019/1)

38. **The President** said she took it that the Council wished to approve the provisional agenda of its 2019 session, as contained in document E/2019/1.

39. *It was so decided.*

40. *The provisional agenda of the 2019 session of the Council was adopted.*

41. **The President**, turning to the question of seating arrangements for delegations, proposed that, as in the past, lots should be drawn to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat.

42. *The delegation of Rwanda was selected by the drawing of lots to take the first seat.*

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.